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REVIEWS

TODAY'S SHORT STORIES ANALYZED

Professor Neal in his preceding work, *Short-Stories in the Making*, contributed a labor-saving invention to the discussion of the short-story (printed with a hyphen) by suggesting for it the term "conte," the meaning of which may be understood independently of hyphens; and this was done before hyphenated names had fallen into general disfavor. Further than that, his work showed keenness and thorough analysis and teaching availability of the type specifically useful in the academic practice for which the book was intended. The present work¹ is a continuation and application of the principles of the former one, although it may be used independently.

It is notably true, as observed in the Preface, that no treatise or method relating to short-story writing can stand unmodified for more than a few years at longest; while fundamentals may remain unchanged, the details of applying them shift from year to year and almost from month to month. This book is therefore of special interest and value because it deals, technically and minutely and yet with striking clearness, with the practice of short-story writing as exemplified in publications of the preceding few months. All art successfully practiced in story writing, apart from personal and subjective considerations, must depend for its guidance upon the study of the short-stories that are written from day to day; and perhaps one of the most useful features of Professor Neal's book is that it leads students from the study of itself to the direct study of the live first-hand data upon which the book is and all other such books must be based, so that it tends to train the writer away from dependency upon sources of authority to see for himself the nature of conditions as they change, and to stimulate his initiative in meeting them. It is sound in theory and skilful in application, useful for any teacher or student of the subject, and perhaps even more useful for those who are compelled to practice without direct personal guidance of any kind.

E. M. H.

¹ *Today's Short Stories Analyzed*. By Robert Wilson Neal, A.M. New York: Oxford University Press, 1918.